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ABSTRACT

A study is reported which is based on the assumption that a teacher's presentation may vary as a function of student set. A guest lecturer was presented to each of 2 introductory psychology classes, one of which had been told that the lecturer was a "cold" person, and the other that he was a "warm" person. The lectures were taped and rated to determine if the lecturer was influenced by these student expectations. Results support the hypothesis. The students expecting a cold teacher produced one, inasmuch as raters judged his lecture performance to be colder, more tense, and less competent at the end of the talk than at the beginning. Just the reverse was reported for the lecture performance to the students expecting a warm teacher. Some implications are suggested. (TL)

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Galatea in the Classroom:

Student Expectations Affect Teacher Behavior

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A frequent demand of student revolutionaries is to have some say in the retention or firing of instructors. On many campuses, student-published ratings and evaluations of professors and courses are available, a trend popular enough to have generated a paper session on "evaluation of college instruction" at the 1970 APA Convention. Since such ratings seem to be part of the zeitgeist, it is important to know what factors influence student ratings of teachers, just as it is important to know what factors influence teacher's ratings of students.

Another important facet of the zeitgeist in psychology is the E effect. All sophisticated Es now know that their expectations can influence the outcome of their experiments, and, after the much publicized "Pygmalion" study by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968), sophisticated teachers now know that their expectations can have significant effects on behavior and performance of students. The present paper describes a demonstration of the potentially strong influence student expectations can have on teacher performance.

In Kelley's (1950) study of the warm-cold variable in the classroom, students were given expectations about a guest lecturer and were found to perceive and to behave toward the lecturer in ways consistent with their expectations. Anyone who has taught will realize that the behavior of the class can affect one's presentation. If students' responses to a teacher are in part a function of their expectations, it follows that a teacher's presentation may also vary as a function of student set; thus, students expecting a "cold" teacher will have one, and those expecting a "warm" teacher will be so blessed.

Method

All phases of the present study were conducted with the E's students in psychology courses offered by the University of Maryland, Far East Division, Republic of Vietnam. The initial format was similar to that of Kelley (1950). A guest lecturer was presented to each of two classes, preceded by written instructions, which, in general, explained that the lecturer hoped to become

a college professor when he finished his Army career, had some graduate work and experience in psychology, and wanted to teach a class for the experience of teaching. Some bogus information, allegedly personality descriptions of him by friends, was given to the students. One class was told that the lecturer's friends considered him to be "quite warm" in his interpersonal relationships; the second class told that he was "quite cold." The guest lecturer was, of course, an accomplice, albeit one unaware of the true nature of the study. A lecture lasting approximately 10 min. on the "Schools of Psychology" was written for him to read to the classes. Prior to his first class, he read the lecture aloud three times for tape recording to become comfortable with it. His first presentation was given to the penultimate session of an Introduction to Psychology course, attended by 23 students, each of whom was given the "warm" set. Two weeks later, he gave the same talk to the first session of a second introductory course, consisting of 24 students, all with the "cold" instructions. His presentations were taped.

To determine the effect of student set on his performance, excerpts from the lecturer's talks were played to two other classes and rated. The first and last 3 min. of each talk were used. Raters were students in a third introductory course and in a social psychology class-a total of 41 students. They were told that the talks were given by a young man who aspired to become a college professor and desired feedback on the quality of his presentations. Each judge rated four 3 min. segments on three dimensions, presented in a 7-point Likert-scale format. The dimensions were warm-cold, tense-relaxed, and good teacher-poor teacher. To the first class (N=21), the segments were presented in this order: "cold" talk, first segment (C_1); "warm" talk, first segment (W_1); "cold" talk, last segment (C_2); and "warm" talk, last segment (W_2). The second class received this order: C_2, W_2, W_1, C_1.

Results

If the lecturer were in fact influenced by the predispositions of the students, a change in his lecture behavior should appear as a function of time-i.e., his last 3 min. should be different from his first 3 min. Further, assuming that he begins each lecture similarly, the last 3 min. of his "cold" lecture should differ from the last segment of his "warm" lecture. A comparison of the initial segments of each lecture will indicate whether the lecturer began each talk in the same manner.

Table 1 contains the mean ratings of each time segment and *t*'s for mean differences. The *t* test for correlated samples was used to compare ratings of the four segments; the D scores used were the differences between ratings of the two time segments by the same rater. Scales were scored 1-7, with the positive extreme-i.e., extremely warm, very relaxed, excellent teacher-receiving a weight of 7.

As shown in Table 1, generally positive ratings were made of all time segments. If student set did influence teacher behavior, differences should have appeared between the first and last time segments of a single speech. In line with this prediction, C_2 was rated as colder and poorer than C_1, with no significant difference on the tense-relaxed dimension. No significant differences were found between W_2 and W_1, although the trends were in the predicted direction on all three scales. Nor were significant differences found between C_1 and W_1, suggesting that the style of presentation was similar initially for both talks, Accordingly, there should have been pronounced differences between the final segments of the two talks if the lecturer were responding to student set. In fact, W_2 and C_2 did differ significantly, with W_2 being rated more positively on all three dimensions.

Discussion

The results support the hypothesis that student expectations affect teacher behavior. Students expecting a cold teacher produced one; raters judged the teacher's performance before the cold class to be colder, more tense, less com-

petent at the end of the talk than at the beginning. Similarly, the same speaker giving the same talk was judged as warmer, more relaxed, more competent during the last segment of his talk to the warm class than during the final segment of his presentation to the cold class. Further, differences were produced not only along the specific dimension of warm-cold but along related dimensions of teacher behavior.

Kelley's (1950) data indicated that students expecting a warm teacher interacted more frequently with him than did those expecting him to be cold. One can imagine students who have read in the latest installment of the faculty guide that Professor X is uninspiring paying less attention, participating less in class, and responding less to the professor's efforts to enthuse the class. Professor X, responding to this behavior, may in turn become less enthusiastic, and each side will continue reinforcing the other's negative behavior with predictably regrettable results. Such occurrences could easily prevent young and inexperienced teachers from ever developing any enthusiasm or competence for teaching.

Widespread use of faculty ratings by students may have untoward results, a possibility which suggests, among other things, that those who compile them have an obligation to do so carefully, but perhaps more importantly, that faculty members would do well to read what is written about them and be sensitive to the way they are being perceived by their students.

References

Kelley, H. H. The warm-cold variable in first impressions of people. Journal of Personality, 1950, 18, 431-439.

Rosenthal, R., & Jacobson, L. Pygmalion in the classroom: Teacher expectations and pupils' intellectual development. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1968.

Table 1

Mean Ratings of the Four Time Segments and t Values

Variable	M rating				t value			
	C_1	C_2	C_3	C_4	C_1-C_2	W_2-W_1	W_1-C_1	W_2-C_2
Warm-cold	5.64	5.00	5.77	5.94	5.16**	1.65	1.29	6.55**
Tense-relaxed	5.77	5.58	5.94	6.08	1.58	1.11	1.47	3.47*
Good-poor	5.83	5.50	5.94	6.14	2.03*	1.65	1.11	4.99**

Note--N=41
* $p < .01$
** $p < .001$